AVSIM Commercial FSX Add-on Review

Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation

Product Information		
Publishers: Perfect Flight		
Description: Full Featured Airline flight/Multi-crew Environment .		
Download Size: 125 MB	**Format:** Download/Boxed	**Simulation Type:** FSX
Reviewed by: Ray Marshall, AVSIM Contributing Reviewer - December 17, 2011		

When was the last time you had a perfect flight in FSX?

There is a company in Italy that is hard at work preparing a new batch of FSX add-ons with exactly that in mind. This company has been around since the FS98 days and they are absolute masters at building adventures and missions for flight simulation. You may have already guessed their company name of choice is.

Perfect Flight has a houseful of adventure and mission related titles available for immediate download or boxed media by mail. Many are full dedicated single aircraft models with real world missions while others are a collection of regional or worldwide approaches using scheduled airline flights

A short announcement on our main AVSIM online page caught my attention early last week

As one of the early adopters of the Aerosoft Airbus X, this drew me in. At first, I wasn't sure what was being touted but using phrases like 'realistic multi-crew airline missions, real flight operations, ambience, interactive checklists,' forced me to click on the link.

I must have spent an hour or more absorbing the interesting titles available and wondering about the hatchet job on some of the descriptions. I fired off an enquiry to see who was the mastermind behind all these previously undiscovered adventures. It turns out to be yet another one of those flight simulator developer success stories.

Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation

Posted: Friday, December 2, 2011 - 14:53

Now available from Perfect Flight is Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation. Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation is not only a complete game add-on for Microsoft Flight Simulator X but also an expansion for Aerosoft Airbus X Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation includes realistic multi-crew airline missions to replicate real flight operations in a populate aeronautical world ambience with interactive briefing step to step checklists, Speed restriction, Cabin Announcement and much more. You can choice from three different versions

Marco Martini was a budding young attorney in Salemo, Italy when FS98 was introduced. Discovering that playing with flight simulators was much more enjoyable than lawyer work opened up a new world to him. However, he quickly found that his interest in instrument flying was not very well developed in flight simulation in 1997, and not being able to read the English only manuals really crippled his new found hobby.

By learning enough English to decipher the manuals and to write just enough to get by, he soon found that he had a talent for computer programming. In short order he found that one could program FS98 using Adventure Basic Language. A slow transition from practicing attorney to Adventure Maker gradually lead to a bonifide Missions Maker. Over the next few years, Marco assembled a crack team of specialists from around the world and now they are the leading 'Missions' developers for FSX.

Like most developers, they easily found several voids and missing links and starting filling them with niche type aircraft and unique add-on products. Their most successful to date has been the 'Fly the B717-200' as a standalone original aircraft with 15 exciting missions included. Others popular add-ons are the Fly the MD-11 and Lockheed L-1011 Tristar. The latest trend is to zero in on realistic airline operations and services. The Eurowings CRJ-700, Jumbo X, FSX Missions and several specific single flights are some of the more recent releases.

I think all this experience has been packed into the one we now have in front of us. These are like tutorial flights taken to a much higher level and loaded with new sights and sounds. This is a full package of cockpit management from start to finish.

The goal of Perfect Flight has always been offer a realistic aeronautical ambiance, simple to use but fully enjoyable. I

think they have certainly achieved their goal with the Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation.

Marco is quick to point out that Perfect Flight has never targeted the complicated and ultra realistic procedures that a select few are always seeking. They want this to be fun and easy for us airline pilot wannabes.

The most recent new product is the Flight Operations X British Airways. This is a new product line with its own flight manager and over 300 saved flights that you can edit and compile into a single mission.

It comes with all the navigation charts and maps needed for these flights. You determine weather conditions, season, departure date, time, etc. This also has the entire BA fleet for FSX plus the Perfect Flight L-1011 Tristar in old British livery. The missions are similar to the Ultimate Airbus A321 with all the ATC interactions, checklists, speed calls, announcements, etc.

What comes with the download?

That depends on which of the three offered packages that you choose. Let me walk you through the choices.

- Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation Full Version
- Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation Mission Pack
- Ultimate Airbus A321 Special Bundle

The first choice, the Full version, is intended for the FSX user that wishes to fly the default Airbus A321 provided with the original installation of FSX. But, to give you more bang for your buck, they are including 9 new FSX liveries and a new FSX ready upgraded VC cockpit. These are for you to fly the 27 included missions or airline flights with either the default A321 or the Perfect Flight A321. The nine liveries are Air France, Alitalia, Air Berlin, Nikki Air, Lufthansa, US Airways, Lan, British Airways and Iberia. The 28 page pdf user manual includes an extensive Flight Manual to take you step by step through the procedures of flying this modern airliner. This part alone may be worth buying the package. It is really that good.

In addition to all this the 27 missions are tailored and adapted for the Aerosoft AirbusX A321.

Next, comes the realistic flight plans, interactive flight briefings and cockpit and cabin preparations. This includes step by step checklists and detailed cockpit procedures.

- Welcome Captain
- Pre-start and Startup
- Taxi and Takeoff
- Cruise and Descent
- Approach , Landing, and Shutdown

All the required charts and approach plates are included in the kneepad and a popup window. A special popup iPad Radar gauge is included that will be discussed a little further into the review. Cabin announcements are throughout the flight.

The 27 missions for the FSX Airbus A321 range from short 30 minute hops to 2:30 flights. Most of these locations were totally unknown to me so I made an Excel chart so I could sort the columns. Heck, I didn't even know what country some of the airports were located in.

Perfect Flight has chosen representative locations throughout the world for this add-on. There are flights in the Southwest US, in South America, and Western Europe. There are a few 30 – 40 minutes flights, a few 2 – 2 ½ hour flights and the balance in the one to two hour range. Of course, all the flights use 'real weather' so the exact flight time is unpredictable. I flew the same flight 3 times and had different runways for takeoff or landing each

time. Some of these shorter flights can have an approach and landing sequence that takes longer than the cruise phase. Depending on the runway is use, the taxi time can be a significant portion of the total flight time.

Multi-Crew Environment

If you have not flown with the assistance of a talking co-pilot with cabin and crew announcements, then you are in for a real treat. A pleasant greeting, with called checklists with popup windows and v-speed callouts adds so much to the experience. A friendly reminder to turn on landing lights or slow down during decent is a nice touch.

Each of the 27 missions or flights are gate to gate so you will be required to perform all flight crew functions for all phases of the flight. Many of the FSX functions are disabled when using missions so you have to be on your game at all times. You do have the option of checking the box in FSX prior to starting a flight to enable changes. Of course, if you enable this feature you will not receive credit for the flight in your log book.

In addition to the 27 missions for the default A321 and the newly installed PF_A321, you will find all 27 missions tailored to the Aerosoft Airbus X A321. These will have the (AS) added to the mission title. You are not required to have the Aerosoft AirbusX installed but without it, you cannot access these missions.

As mentioned early, I am one of the early adopters of the Aerosoft AirbusX and enjoy the fantastic detail of both the cabin VC and the exterior. The two combined make it about as good as it gets today.

Download Mission Pack - **42 MB**
Download Full Version - **125 MB**
Special Bundle – Priority Mail
2- Box Delivery only (3-4 bus. days)

The 3rd purchase option is the Special Bundle which adds the Aerosoft AirbusX FSX add-on to the Perfect Flight Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation Mission Pack. This is intended for those that do not already own the Aerosoft AirbusX.

The 2nd or middle purchase option is the Mission Pack, which is includes the 27 Missions tailored to the Aerosoft AirbusX A321, including all the flight planning, briefings, checklists, airport charts and approach plates and the user guide with the A321 flight tutorial.

So to recap the purchase options:

Full Version – everything except the Aerosoft Airbus X add on aircraft.
Missions Pack – the 27 missions for the Aerosoft Airbus X A321
Special Bundle – the Mission Pack + the Aerosoft Airbus X add on.

How do I get started?

Select one of the three purchase options, then choose instant download or elect for snail mail delivery of boxed CD/ DVD.

ULTIMATE AIRBUS A321 SIMULATION includes nine fine repaints for default Flight Simulator X Airbus A321; a set of 27 MISSION for default Airbus A321 plus a set of 27 Missions for Aerosoft Airbus X owners.
LIVERIES INCLUDED: Air France, Alitalia, Air Berlin, Nikki Air, Lufthansa, US Airways, Lan, British Airways, Iberia
SYSTEM REQUIREMENT - Flight Simulator X - 500 Mb of Free Space on Hard Disk - CD-ROM Drive - Video Card 12/8 Mb - Ram 1 Gb

I chose the Full Version download for this review. One 125 MB ZIP file is delivered and generates two exe and one pdf file. I realize you may be eager to get started but, it is in your best interest to read the pdf file first. Page 5 outlines the choices and sequence of installations. Both installation files are simple exe, so when using Windows7 make sure you are install using Admin privileges with windows properly configured for new installs with the UAE disabled.

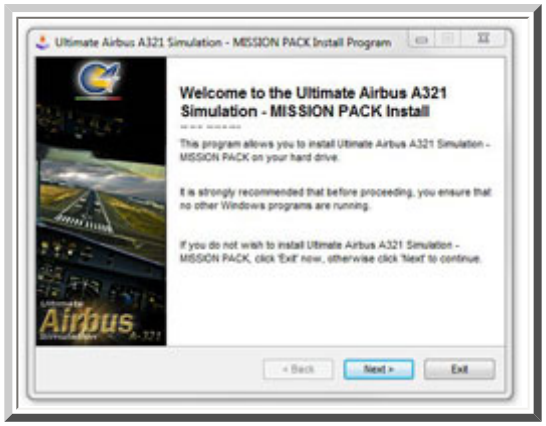
You are instructed to run the A321 Aircraft setup.exe first to install the 9 new liveries. Then run the Full_Missions_Pack.exe. You can install either just the default mission pack or the Aerosoft Airbus X mission pack or both. I chose both. Of course, if you do not have the Aerosoft Airbus X installed you cannot use the Aerosoft Airbus X mission pack.

Also, I found that you must have the standard Aerosoft Airbus X liveries installed for the FSX missions to load properly. I had deleted a few of the European liveries and as luck would have it, the first flight I chose uses the Alitalia BIXI livery that I had deleted.

So what is so special about these missions?

I think the simple answer is the amount of reality added to the simulation. A by-product is that you will learn to properly fly the Airbus A321 using the flight tutorial included in the user manual. The total package having pre-built realistic flight plans, crew voices throughout the flight, step by step checklists specific for your flight and your aircraft of choice, all the needed charts, frequencies, approaches, etc loaded in the kneeboard and available as a popup brings it all together for full enjoyment.

As mentioned earlier, by using real weather for all flights, you really never know for sure the runway in use or the descent profile and approach for landing at your destination. These will change daily or even hourly so you can fly many of these flights over and over and have new experiences each time.


Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation - MISSION PACK Install Program
Welcome to the Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation - MISSION PACK Install
This program allows you to install Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation - MISSION PACK on your hard drive.
It is strongly recommended that before proceeding, you ensure that no other Windows programs are running.
If you do not wish to install Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation - MISSION PACK, click 'Exit' now, otherwise click 'Next' to continue.
< Back
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Should you have add-on sceneries such as the 50 cm SimSavvy Photoreal scenery, available at the Avsim Store, and upgraded airport sceneries, such as FSDT's or Glenn Johnson's KLAX then all the better. UK2000's Heathrow Extreme will most definitely improve the EGLL comings and goings.

Can I make changes to the flight plans or missions?

You can always request a different altitude, approach or runway when using the default ATC function. You may not always get your first choice but, you can keep asking. A changed approach will not necessarily change the landing runway, meaning as you approach the outer marker, you will most likely be given a circling approach to landing. If you elect to make changes in the mission by placing a check in the box on the FSX start screen you will not receive credit for the mission when complete. I recommend you try the mission first with the box unchecked with no changes.

A useful hint on flying with ATC. Should you want to step away from a flight for a few minutes without risking missing a transmission that requires your confirmation – then find a place where you are requested to change to different center or frequency and just delay the change until you return. Your flight progress will continue and you will not be blackballed and the IFR flight plan cancelled because you failed to respond.

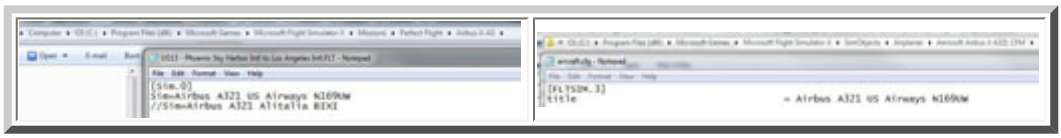
Can I substitute different aircraft?

Not recommended but yes, if you know what you are doing. As always, make sure you make backup copies prior to making any changes, and it is a good idea to write yourself a short text file to remind yourself what you changed. For instance, I changed the Alitalia livery for the 3 Southwest US flights to a US Airways livery that I downloaded from Aerosoft. Because the two are basically the same aircraft and equipment, all that I have changed is the external appearance and the call sign. This is a simple one line change in the specific FLT files located in the Missions/Perfect Flight/Airbus X-AS folder for my setup. Yours may be slightly different, depending on your FSX installation.

Should you attempt something similar, just keep a few things in mind.

1. Perfect Flight most likely will not assist you if you mess up other files.
2. It is easier than you think to screw up something else.
3. You should always copy and paste rather than type an entry.
4. Only save files after proper backups of originals

5. This is not recommended by anyone, but it works. I copied the aircraft description from the aircraft.cfg file found here:



This simple editing was performed using the free Notepad basic text editor provided by Windows. Most of the other world airliner liveries seem to be matched properly with the geographic location and route. I would recommend that you not make any other changes because it is so easy to unintentionally mess up other files.

How about the new VC included for the FSX Airbus 321 liveries?

The updated VC and the 9 new liveries should be welcomed.

FSX default vs Perfect Flight VC view.

Additional views have been added. The new jump seat view is especially nice.

Flight paths.

Should some of you not be familiar with some of the chosen flights, you can use any of several online viewers. Here are a few flightaware.com views of mission number 5 (AS) AZ08 Venice to Gatwick and number 19 (AS) AF16 Buenos Aires, Argentina to Santiago, Chile and number 13 (AS) KG04 Costa del Sol to Hamburg.

The Aerosoft Airbus X has an exceptionally well done Virtual Cockpit.

Everything is crisp and clear, even the dust and dirty spots.

This is one of the free liveries available for download from the Aerosoft site.

A perfect fit for the Aerosoft AirbusX flights in Southwest USA.

How it works.

I loaded up the short flight from Fiumicino to Villafranca several times just to see if the ATC instructions would vary during the same day. To my surprise, with 4 individual startups, I was given 3 different runways for departure and a different initial climb to altitude each for the 4 starts. From departure gate B7, I was given IFR taxi instructions to 16R, 34L, and 7. The initial climb altitudes were 13,000 feet, 11,000 ft, 7,000 ft and 14,000. This was all within about 30 minutes or so. Oh, it was also drizzling rain in the last two startups.

A little too eager for takeoff in Rome. I should be behind the wait line, but it is not easy to back these babies up and I am on the opposite side of the **Leonardo da Vinci - Fiumicino Airport** from the control tower. Maybe the controllers have fuzzy binoculars.

For those of you that have Aivlasoft's Electronic Flight Bag you will be glad to know it fits like a glove with the Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation. I copied all the flight plans over to a folder to make them available to the EFB. I can use the EFB to monitor the mission progress and to have a full visual picture of the vectors for approaches, etc. If you don't have it, then you can use the full package totally free for 30 days.

In addition to all its substantial features, EFB adds the missing SIDS and STARS, cruise management and modified flight plans on the fly to the Aerosoft Airbus X.

This is the AZ31 Mission – Phoenix Sky Harbor to Los Angeles Intl.

Example of the EFB taxi assist.

The improved VC Airbus A321 cockpit included in the Full version.

Freebie

While searching for research information I came across this well laid out checklist for the A321. Totally free from Werner Schott in Switzerland.

Startup Screens

Start at the Missions load screen in FSX. Select the Category – Ultimate Airbus A321. All are Expert rated. The Aerosoft Airbus X missions have the (AS) designation in front of the title. Make your selection and step through the Briefing and other details.

Then press the 'Fly' button to load the mission and have a nice flight, Captain.

Loading and reviewing screens.

Are there any mistakes in the Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation?

Well, yes but only minor irritations and they can be easily fixed, actually more like hiccups. When your first officer says to 'turn on pitot heat' the word 'pitot' doesn't sound like anything I've ever heard in a cockpit before, but, the popup window is easy enough to read. I'm sure one of our Avsim fix-it guys will make a replacement WAV file and all will be well. I'm not sure it is on the standard Airbus A321 checklist anyway.

Another one is a procedural thing and is not what is practiced in the real world by any airline anyplace, but this is a simulation, remember.

This A321 simulation calls for the 'Before Takeoff Checklist' to be performed on the runway with the parking brake set. That is a no – no. Never, ever set

the parking brake while on the active runway. You should only taxi onto the active runway for takeoff when instructed by ATC and it will be either for immediate takeoff or to taxi into position and hold (this is only to wait for the plane that just landed to clear the runway). The simple fix it to perform the 'Before Takeoff Checklist' just prior to taxiing onto to the active runway.

As more users weigh in on this package we will most likely have a small update or patch from time to time. I have spent most of my flying time with the Aerosoft specific missions and I am of the opinion that we can do a better job of tailoring the checklists to the Airbus 321. Some of the more generic terms can be updated to the Airbus (read NOT Boeing) vernacular. Like the setting for the autobrakes should be Max, not RTO and the Takeoff Checklist should include the TO Config Check. I'm still looking for the NAV/GPS switch in the AirbusX. These should be fairly straight forward changes for the better and will most likely happen. I would also like to see a few more items added to the checklists. I am constantly reminding myself the goal is the make it fun to fly and not to overcomplicate it as Marco has stated.

What's next?

Perfect Flight is targeting 2012 for additional mission releases for commercial aircraft such as the iFly Boeing 737NGX and the Flight1 MD 80. These should be similar to the Ultimate Aerosoft Airbus A321 Simulation. I have already suggested the PMDG Boeing 737NGX be added to the wish list.

Meanwhile

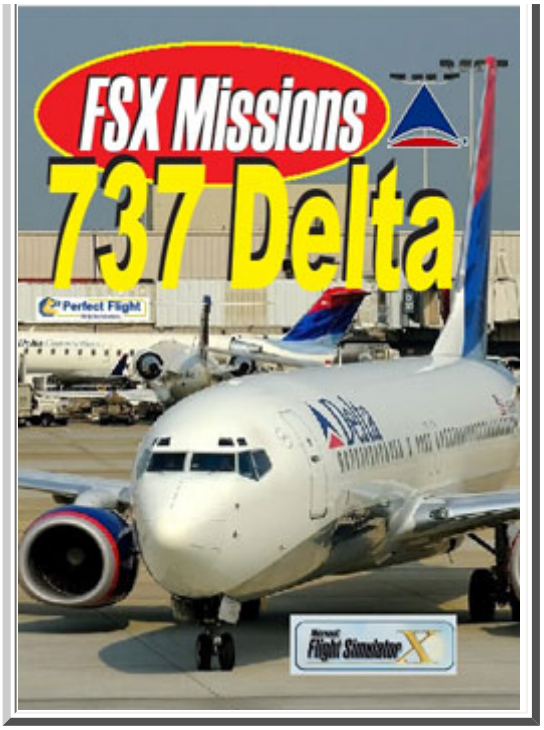
The 303 flights for British Airways can occupy a bit of your time if you tend to fly in their realm. Check out ***Flight Operations X British Airways*** specifically tailored to BA world. This one has the built in Flight Manager so you can control seasons and weather.

If you are a Boeing 737 fan then you can't go wrong with the ***FSX Missions 737 Delta***. It is very similar to this Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulations except all the missions/flights are standard Delta routes (in the USA) using the B737-800. All the nifty features are present in this one also.

And if neither of these two blow up your skirt, I recommend you take a look at ***FS Approaches Vol 3 Worldwide Airports***. This one has 70 flights/ approaches throughout the world. Just about every country is represented and the approaches generally start with you at an intermediate altitude – FL160 – FL200 – about 80 miles from your destination. It has the multi – crew environment, announcements, etc.

A special feature is the included tutorial on how to use the *Garmin GPS500* to execute an approach. Not just basic approaches, but procedure turns, holds, missed approaches, and vectors to final. This little jewel is good enough to be a standalone product. It also has its own aircraft fleet and all necessary maps and charts. Wow. How did we miss these things.

Some of these titles are a little dated, but they still work just fine with FSX. There is still a lot of enjoyment to be had with these pre-built flights.



Conclusion

This is most definitely a quality add-on that elevates flight simulation to a whole new level of immersion. Until you personally experience the verbal conversations and the professional level of flight planning with the perfectly timed step by step checklists it is difficult to know what you have been missing. By taking the time to walk through the flight tutorial pages of the user manual along with the choreographed flight plans you will then appreciate what is required to sit in the left seat of one of these modern airliners. Those cabin announcements are a welcome addition to my flying.

Once you start flying with the V-speed calls and the gear and flaps callouts it is very difficult to fly without them.

Most of you will also develop a new found respect for the default GPS and ATC as you monitor the progress of your flight, minute by minute. Even the new iPad Radar gauge will be used more frequently than one would guess. A simple click will transfer the necessary frequencies from a displayed list to the COM1 transceiver. This screenshot is the VC of the provided Perfect Flight Airbus A321. Nice improvements.

The choice of real world weather should give many of us a totally new view or two. No more clear skies unless you look out the cockpit window and actually see clear skies.

With a total choice of 27 full featured missions of varying distance and durations selectively scattered around the world one should not feel bored for some time. I think I counted 42 unique airports on the mission list. Of course, they look quite different when you are on final than when you were taking off from the same airport so I'm not sure how to count them.

This product greatly improves the realism of flight simulation.

Recommendations

If you think you have the right stuff to wear the 4 bars on your shoulders then you can start adding new entries to you log book immediately. There is just something special when each mission starts with a sincere "Hello Captain" greeting followed by a matter of fact let's get to work verbal dialogue. All flights start at a departure gate and all end at a destination gate. What transpires between the two is almost magic. Everything you need to complete your mission will be installed on your PC from the one download or from the delivered media box. I am truly disappointed that it took me so long to find this product. My recommendation is to take advantage of the special offer and start enjoying your new flight crew members, Captain.

A one week only special discount is available to AVSIM review readers. Use this link when ordering for a **30% discount** on any Perfect Flight product for the next 7 days. This is an especially good price with the Euro/Dollar conversion also being temporarily in our favor. Look for a special banner on the home page for the Avsim Review readers special discount.

The Special Bundle is already on sale and if you don't have the Aerosoft Airbus X here is the perfect time to add it to your virtual hangar.

Photo credit

- Alitalia aircraft in flight – Photo Copyright Danny Hill - media use.

Some screenshots of Aerosoft Airbus X provided by Mutly's Hangar and Screenshot Artist UK, thanks. All other screenshots by author. Images and logos provided by Perfect Flight or screen captured at commercial retail sites.

Test System	
Computer Specs	
Quadcore Intel CPU i7-870 2.93 GHz, 1TB SATA-II HD Windows7 – 64 bit OS, 8 GB RAM nVidia GTX-460 / 1 GB, Dell 24" LCD/Dell 18" LCD Realtek HD Audio, Logitech Z-5500 5.1 speakers, Grado SR-60 Headphones, Logitech 3D Pro Joystick CH Products USB Flight Yoke and Pro Pedals FSX/Acceleration	
Flight Test Time:	**Research Time:**
20 Hours	20 Hours

Printing

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Ultimate Airbus A321 Simulation

(adobe acrobat required)

Comments?

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